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Chairman: Mr. Niculescu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*)

(c) Women in development (*continued*)

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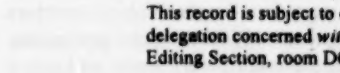

In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Niculescu (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*) (A/54/56, A/54/97-E/1999/52, A/54/170, A/54/171-E/1999/111; A/C.2/54/5)

(c) Women in development (*continued*) (A/54/156-E/1999/102, A/54/156/Add.1-E/1999/102/Add.1, A/54/227, and A/54/275)

1. **Ms. Rizk** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s had generated increasing international agreement about the need to guarantee women equal rights and to enhance their participation in various spheres, including development. Despite progress in that regard, the high incidence of poverty among women was one of several obstacles to their effective participation in development efforts. His delegation therefore welcomed the decision to focus on women and poverty on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 1999.

2. Developing countries suffered from high levels of foreign indebtedness, marginalization caused by the process of economic globalization, the diminishing availability of official development assistance and the concentration of direct foreign investment in only a small number of countries. The international community's support was needed if those challenges were to be overcome and women were to contribute positively to the achievement of growth in developing countries.

3. The Syrian Constitution strongly advocated the elimination of barriers to the full and effective participation of women in political, social, cultural and economic life. Women occupied senior positions in Syria's legislative, executive, judicial and diplomatic bodies, as well as in the armed forces and the police force. Syrian women could vote and stand for election at all levels, enjoying the right to equal pay for equal work and complete equality with men in education.

4. The Syrian Government fully supported non-government organizations working to empower women and to enhance their participation in the social and economic development process. Indeed, Syrian women occupied senior positions in a number of grass-roots organizations and trade unions.

5. A national strategy for Syrian women until the year 2005 had been devised in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference and the national committee responsible for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action cooperated fully with international organizations on related projects. Work opportunities and training were accorded special importance in efforts to eradicate poverty among women.

6. All the major international conferences had highlighted the detrimental effects of foreign occupation on development, particularly with respect to women. As a result of Israeli occupation, Syrian women in the occupied Syrian Golan, Lebanese women in southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa and Palestinian women had witnessed the breakdown of the family unit and had had their fundamental rights denied, including the right to freedom, education, health care and justice. It was vital to address the causes of such suffering, first and foremost by bringing an end to the occupation.

7. **Ms. Berman** (International Labour Organization) said that ILO had been one of the two lead agencies to make a contribution to the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work (A/54/227) and welcomed its publication. In recent decades, women's participation in the labour market had increased significantly; however, the quality of the jobs they held and their working conditions had not improved. Although the service sector now had a predominance of women, many of those jobs, with the exception of the information and knowledge-based industries and certain high-end professional jobs, were low-skilled, low-wage and labour-intensive. Globalization had aggravated the gap between rich and poor; levels of poverty in the world were increasing and women were disproportionately over-represented among the poor. They worked in sweatshops and in industries, many of which were in export-processing zones — which were often exempt from labour laws — and in the informal sector, where poor working conditions threatened their health and social and psychological well-being and without income security or social protection.

8. ILO took a comprehensive, holistic and multidisciplinary approach to tackling the challenges of globalization, poverty and gender relations. In addition to promoting gender mainstreaming as a means of achieving gender equality, it was also focusing on four strategic areas: the promotion of core labour standards and fundamental rights at work; decent work for all with emphasis on more and better jobs for women; adequate social protection, particularly for part-time and temporary work; and social dialogue aimed at broad-based participation that would give

women a voice in decision-making; gender was a primary cross-cutting theme in each area.

9. ILO had formulated an Action Plan on gender mainstreaming, which reflected its efforts to implement the 1997 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council regarding gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. The Action Plan stressed the mobilization of political commitment at the highest level; support for gender-sensitive institution-building and technical capacity-building; resource mobilization; and the increased representation of women in senior management positions within ILO itself.

10. **Mr. Kim Pil-woo** (Republic of Korea) said that much remained to be done in order to translate the concept of gender and development into action. He stressed the need for an innovative examination of gender roles in the context of development, reorganization of the basic institutions of society and consideration of the impact of globalization on the economic and social lives of women. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on the issue of women in development in a global context, particularly the 1999 World Survey.

11. Owing to inequalities and poor regulation of labour markets, women were disproportionately shouldering the burden of globalization. His delegation supported the recommendation, contained in the 1999 World Survey, to establish a gender-aware policy framework which, it believed, should stress gender equality in the labour market, employment security, family-enabling policies and the equitable division of household responsibilities between men and women. Continued investment in human capital based on gender equality would also help to capitalize on women's potential to contribute to the development process. Domestic efforts to promote gender mainstreaming in the labour market and in economic policies should be accompanied by international policy coordination. In conclusion, concrete actions for advancing the gender-aware concept should be outlined at the special session of the General Assembly to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

12. **Ms. Onoh** (Nigeria) said that while the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/227) indicated that globalization had had a positive impact on the political and economic empowerment of women, it contained very little empirical evidence, particularly with regard to the African countries. For example, statistics on foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa covered only seven African countries. Drawing attention to paragraphs 196 to 212 of the report, which dealt with changing patterns of international labour mobility, she stressed that the international community must consider the issue of international migration and development, including the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development.

13. Under the Labour Code of Nigeria, women who had the same qualifications as men and were performing similar jobs must receive equal pay. That legislation was enforced in both the public and private sectors. In conclusion, while the phenomenon of globalization was an irreversible reality, it should not extend into the cultural sphere; the contribution of wives and mothers to all societies could not be measured in monetary terms, it must be taken into account in the broadest possible concept of development.

14. **Mr. Al-Banai** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait had participated in all the major United Nations conferences held throughout the 1990s and welcomed efforts made in that context to place equality of women on the international agenda and to address gender within the wider context of development and peace.

15. The Constitution of Kuwait enshrined the principle of equal rights and duties for all citizens without distinction on grounds of gender, origin, language or religion, and the State viewed gender equality as central to lasting and sustainable economic growth and development. Women represented a powerful force for change and development in all spheres of life, particularly in the economic arena. Indeed, scientific research had demonstrated the link between investment in women and promotion of economic development. For its part, the State of Kuwait encouraged women's education at all levels; indeed, more than 50 per cent of all Kuwaiti students — in schools and universities — were women.

16. A recent International Labour Organization (ILO) report had shown that women aged between 25 and 54 years accounted for some 40 per cent of the workforce in Kuwait, the highest figure in the Arab world. The fact that the Constitution guaranteed women citizens the freedom to pursue a commercial or professional activity had led to a number of women occupying top-level positions both in Kuwait and abroad. Kuwaiti women also participated fully in the cultural, economic and artistic activities pursued by various national associations.

17. The recent decision by the Emir of Kuwait to grant Kuwaiti women full political rights under the law was evidence of commitment at the highest level to the consolidation of democracy, the achievement of gender equality and the participation of Kuwaiti women in all

aspects of civil life. The Government had enacted a number of additional laws with a view to empowering Kuwaiti women and placing them on an equal footing with men in the political decision-making process.

18. No one should ever forget the courage shown by Kuwaiti women during the struggle to liberate Kuwait from the oppressive Iraqi occupation.

19. The social and psychological suffering caused by Iraqi practices during the occupation had been exacerbated by Iraq's refusal to release Kuwaiti prisoners or to provide information as to their whereabouts. Iraq's recent decision to withdraw from cooperation with the Tripartite Commission established in that regard was a particular concern.

20. No information had ever been received about the seven Kuwaiti women prisoners detained by the Iraqi occupation forces. Kuwait urged Iraq to resume cooperation with the Tripartite Commission and to desist from the exploitation of a humanitarian issue for political ends.

21. The international community should not abandon the Kuwaiti prisoners and should make every effort to persuade Iraq to renounce its decision and to demonstrate good faith by bringing an end to an issue of vital humanitarian concern.

22. All international organizations should accord priority importance to efforts of developing countries to involve women fully in the design and implementation of development policies, while Governments should enact national legislation aimed at granting women equal rights with men.

23. **Ms. Ashipala-Musavyi** (Namibia) noted that the 1999 World Survey did not provide very much information on the situation of African women. In that sense, it was but another illustration of the marginalization of African countries and African women by the globalization process. Trade liberalization had resulted in a loss of employment in Africa, particularly among women, as a result of the shift away from labour-intensive industries; education and training were imperative in order to facilitate women's absorption in the newly created manufacturing jobs. Women's presence in the export manufacturing sector had also diminished with the increase in higher value-added, more technologically sophisticated export products which involved capital-intensive production technologies.

24. The liberalization of agriculture had affected the situation of women and altered the division of labour between the sexes; that, in turn, had had an impact on food security and the welfare of farming households. In Namibia, realizing the importance of subsistence production by women for food security, the Government had adopted a new national agricultural policy to support such production.

25. The Gender Unit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was helping national organizations of its member countries to carry out their programmes, particularly through its Women in Business-SADC Network. In addition to improving women entrepreneurs' access to credit and technical training, the Network was organizing the First Trade Fair in Southern Africa, to be held in Namibia in 2000. The objectives of the Fair were to overcome the feminization of poverty by creating business opportunities for women; to encourage government, bank and business leaders to recognize women entrepreneurs as equal partners in the economy; to share indigenous technologies from each country; and to create a forum for the exchange of ideas. SADC hoped that women from other parts of Africa and the world at large would participate in its activities.

26. **Ms. Elson** (United Nations Development Fund for Women) said that the Fund was in favour of strengthening institutional mechanisms within the United Nations to undertake research and training for the advancement of women, particularly in view of the forthcoming five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. UNIFEM had a programme to translate political commitments on gender equality, undertaken at the major global conferences of the 1990s, into concrete actions at the national level. The Programme had three objectives: strengthening women's economic capabilities and rights; establishing governance and leadership; and promoting women's human rights and eliminating violence against women. UNIFEM was working to improve technical know-how in over 100 countries, using a number of key strategies, such as building synergetic partnerships; increasing capacity to undertake women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming initiatives; and improving and increasing the knowledge base on lessons learned. In implementing its mandate to support gender mainstreaming in the resident coordinator system, UNIFEM focused on building partnerships among United Nations organizations and between those organizations and government and non-governmental organizations, and on creating opportunities for individuals and groups using innovative and catalytic approaches to sharing experiences and lessons learned.

27. In regions throughout the world, a gender perspective had been incorporated in trade agreements, and women's economic literacy had been strengthened. The Council of Ministers of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) had established a Specialized Group on Women to advise the Council on public policies for gender

equality; women's organizations in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean were being consulted in connection with the renewal of the Lomé Convention in 2000; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which included Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, had established a Women's Desk funded by UNIFEM.

28. UNIFEM was working with other United Nations organizations to eliminate gender-based violence in the African, Asia-Pacific and Latin American and Caribbean regions. Concrete results included the endorsement by over 1,000 national non-governmental organizations and municipal groups of an anti-violence campaign in Brazil; the adoption of a law by the Senegalese Parliament prohibiting female genital mutilation, and India's request to UNIFEM for assistance in incorporating a gender perspective in its police training curriculum.

29. Increasingly, UNIFEM was focusing on the economic aspects of gender-based violence; in that connection, it was supporting the work of Governments seeking to combat trafficking in women and girls through innovative community-based initiatives that provided alternatives and other services for victims. UNIFEM also managed a Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. Thus far, it had invested more than $3 million and supported more than 70 projects in nearly 50 countries. With support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Foundation, a learning component of the Trust Fund would be disseminating information on effective strategies for combating violence against women and girls.

30. In Central America, South-East Asia and South Asia, UNIFEM supported strategies for incorporating gender in national statistics and census exercises. The training it had provided to census-takers in Pakistan had ultimately increased the awareness of women's contribution to the national economy and led to the establishment of a regional South Asia forum to share expertise and experiences on census exercises.

31. The Fund had devised innovative approaches to building the gender-awareness capacities of Governments, non-governmental organizations and other United Nations organizations. With the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it had made gender expertise available in 10 countries; with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Volunteers, it had assigned gender specialists to 14 countries; and, in addition to its own 11 regional programme advisers, was providing gender advisers to the resident coordinator system. In Mozambique, UNIFEM and UNFPA had launched an initiative to implement a post-Beijing action plan within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

32. In an effort to increase and improve the knowledge base on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, the UNIFEM regional offices would be disseminating manuals on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. In partnership with UNDP, UNIFEM was leading an initiative of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality on useful practices in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. The database, which contained input from a number of other United Nations agencies, would be available on the Internet. UNIFEM would also be publishing a new biennial publication known as "Progress of the World's Women", which would stress the role of statistics and data in advocacy for gender equality.

33. **Ms. Silović** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work (A/54/227) would be particularly useful to UNDP in its preparations for the review processes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development. The Programme's renewed focus on governance would ensure that its policy dialogue and operational activities supported and fostered progress towards gender equality. The task of UNDP was to help women seize opportunities and work with Governments and other partners to minimize the negative effects of globalization. One way that UNDP was doing that was through its programme on gender and macroeconomics in which it was researching innovative responses and sharing the outcomes with Governments and operational units.

34. The Programme's work on gender and poverty was also relevant. UNDP emphasized working with governance institutions to ensure maximum entitlements and access to resources for the poor, including the gender dimensions of those entitlements and access channels. It also sought to build the capacities of the poor to maximize their own entitlements.

35. During the current year, UNDP had completed a planned series of extensive consultations with all country offices on the individual and organizational capacity needed to mainstream gender-inequality concerns. The results of that exercise were contained in a report entitled "Building Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming: UNDP's Experience". Throughout that process, the Programme had cooperated with UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The

support and contributions of most of the Programme's development partners, which included over 80 Governments, had been very helpful. A direct result of the consultations had been the strengthening of the Programme's organizational capacity for effective gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming strategies were in place in an estimated 20 per cent of country offices, and in many programme countries gender-equality briefing kits had been prepared.

36. One area that posed particular challenges to a gender-mainstreaming agenda was that of tracking and measurement, which was closely related to ensuring full accountability. UNDP had just completed its first year of implementing the Strategic Results Framework, its new mechanism for tracking and reporting on achievements in each of its priority areas. A major challenge in that process had been to reflect the integrated character of operational activities, while avoiding double and triple counting of budgetary allocations.

37. **Ms. Núñez Mordoche** (Cuba) said that Cuba firmly supported the work of INSTRAW, which was one of the few United Nations agencies situated in a developing country. It was necessary to do everything possible not only to maintain and improve the Institute but, above all, ensure that it functioned in a way that made it accessible to all developing countries.

38. Her delegation appreciated the contributions that donors had made with a view to improving INSTRAW, especially the use of modern technology, such as the Internet. While such technology would undoubtedly improve the work of the Institute, they could not substitute for more traditional approaches that involved human contact. Moreover, INSTRAW should be financed from the regular budget of the United Nations, since voluntary contributions could not support the operation of such an important United Nations agency.

39. **Ms. Aftab** (Pakistan) said that although more women had been incorporated into employment, they usually had to accept conditions inferior to those of men. While the so-called trend towards the flexibilization of labour had expanded the ranks of women in paid employment, much of the employment created had involved irregular forms of work that were low-paying and insecure and had few prospects for training and promotion. Flexibilization and informalization meant that many of the costs of market volatility and economic recession were borne by women who were the most vulnerable workers since they were less likely to be covered by labour regulations dealing with social and employment security, especially in developing countries. In times of economic difficulty the family became the welfare provider of the last resort. Since women had primary responsibility for the care of the home and family, the demands placed on them appeared to have increased as a result of reductions in social sector expenditure.

40. Developing countries, including Pakistan, had repeatedly drawn attention to the negative impact of globalization and had questioned the so-called "inevitability" of that process. Their concerns had remained, for the most part, unanswered. In his report (A/54/227), the Secretary-General proposed a "gender-aware policy agenda". While many of the Secretary-General's recommendations were useful, they did not go far enough in addressing the fundamental problems and issues that globalization had created for women in development. Those problems required a more rigorous and in-depth analysis of globalization, its dynamics and the forces that continued to shape it both as a theoretical construct and as a process. Such an analysis could form the basis of a real discourse on policy choices.

41. **Mr. Ayari** (Tunisia) said that since its independence, Tunisia had made the principles of respect for human rights and the promotion of women's rights an integral part of its domestic policy. In order to establish true equality between the sexes and strengthen women's rights, Tunisia had amended its four major codes: the Personal Status Code, the Nationality Code, the Penal Code and the Labour Code. The new amendments to the Personal Status Code provided that spouses should assist one another in running the household and in child-rearing. The amendments also confirmed the mother's guardianship rights and established a fund guaranteeing payment of support for divorced women and their children.

42. The Labour Code contained a general article on non-discrimination between men and women, and persons who did not respect that principle were subject to penalties. In the area of education, the law provided for obligatory and free primary education for all citizens, which made it possible to slow down the drop-out rate among rural girls. In 1997, 99 per cent of six-year-old Tunisian girls had been enrolled in school. In secondary education, girls accounted for 48 per cent, and in higher education, 48.5 per cent of the total student body. With a view to achieving equality, Tunisia had established mechanisms to implement and follow up its measures to improve the economic and social status of women.

43. Tunisia's strategy to promote women's rights was based on strengthening the principle of equality and partnership between the sexes in order to ensure equal

opportunities in all fields and encouraging women to participate fully in development. Tunisia was convinced that the advancement of women would contribute to the advancement of humanity as a whole, and reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and supported all efforts to promote and strengthen the status of women and their role in economic and social development.

44. **Mr. Maruyama** (Japan) said that the advancement of women was a high priority for Japan as it sought to achieve the goal of poverty eradication. To that end, the Japanese Government had launched its Initiative on Women in Development, which attached special importance to improving women's educational standards, improving women's health and promoting economic and social participation. The Government of Japan intended to promote the Initiative in a comprehensive manner, bearing in mind the interrelationship between those three important areas.

45. It was essential that women should participate in economic and social development on equal terms with men and share equally in the benefits provided, thereby ensuring that development would be balanced and sustained. To that end, the Government of Japan had established the Japanese Women in Development Fund at the Gender in Development Programme of UNDP in 1995, where it had already established the Japanese Human Resources Development Fund in 1986. The newer Fund was intended to serve as a catalyst for promoting and supporting women's participation in economic and social life and, over the long term, for building capacity for sustainable human development, particularly for gender equality and the empowerment of women. As of 1998, Japan's contributions to the Fund had totalled $7.9 million. In 1999, the Government of Japan would contribute about $3 million to the Women in Development Fund, along with $10 million to the Human Resources Development Fund. Japan hoped that full use would be made of the Women in Development Fund to promote mainstreaming of gender equality in development activities in developing countries. While Japan's assistance in that field already exceeded $600 million a year, it would make efforts to increase the support it provided for the implementation of its Initiative on Women in Development.

46. **Mr. Bamexon** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP had made vigorous efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in its programmes. A gender perspective had been introduced in recent policy papers and in the provision of humanitarian assistance for complex emergencies and natural disasters. As WFP moved from a women-in-development approach to a gender-mainstreamed approach, it was concerned that too much mainstreaming could result in the disappearance of a qualitative focus on gender issues and women's empowerment. Moreover, although efforts were being made to modify behaviour patterns and institutional structures, not all staff, counterparts and implementing partners supported gender equality. Thus, WFP might not be able to meet the ambitious targets it had set for itself.

47. While globalization could bring many gains for women, it would not in itself eliminate gender inequalities. The extent of poverty, which was becoming increasingly feminized, was a good example of the lack of attention to gender issues at the macroeconomic policy level in spite of the Beijing Platform for Action. Moreover, women were often invisible in national statistics since many of them were active only in the informal economy.

48. The role of WFP in influencing globalization was marginal, since the Programme did not usually intervene at the policy level. However, WFP did endorse the strategy of investing in women's capacities, particularly through "food-for-training". To the extent possible, that included self-esteem-building and leadership training, using information tools where appropriate. Together with other partners, WFP lobbied for more attention to women's technological needs for improved food production. It also urged Governments to develop macroeconomic policies that addressed the gender dimension in poverty alleviation.

49. One of the reasons WFP invested in women was the intimate link between food security and poverty. When WFP invested in women, it found that women earned more and were more confident about their earning power; women and their households ate more and better food; women challenged their gender-based oppression; women became entrepreneurs and gained access to development; and poverty and hunger were reduced. The Programme's Action Plan on Commitments to Women set concrete targets to ensure that at least 25 per cent of its economic resources, usually through food-for-work, went directly to women in the short term and that women had a voice in deciding what projects they wanted for long-term benefits.

50. WFP was committed to educating girls and women and had undertaken to provide 50 per cent of its education resources to girls, even in countries where the gender gap was greatest and the task was the most difficult. It had pioneered its well known Take-Home Rations Programme for Girls, which enabled parents to send girls to school while offsetting the opportunity cost through a take-home food ration for families who kept their girls in school. That approach was currently being evaluated. The Programme's new policy, called "Enabling Development", included, as

one of its five strategic areas, education and training, especially for women.

51. WFP insisted that women should have a voice in decision-making about food, especially food distribution, in the community and in the household. While the Programme had ensured that women were members of food-management committees, women without leadership training often had no idea how to engage in food management. Without leadership training, the desired results would not be achieved.

52. One way to encourage women's participation was through the presence of more female staff, who could talk to women. During the post-Beijing period, WFP had begun to redress the gender imbalance among its professional staff, and women currently accounted for 32 per cent of professionals. That had been a result of the Programme's policy that every second new recruit should be a woman and that recruitment officers were held accountable for achieving that goal. In addition, one WFP staff member had been assigned the task of developing strategies for recruiting women. The Programme was committed to investing in women in order to provide them with a voice in decision-making since that would promote economic asset-building and empowerment for poverty eradication.

53. The Programme was preparing seriously for the Beijing review process and was participating at a high level in regional preparatory meetings. At the same time, it was convening its gender focal points in its own regional meetings with a view to coming up with a strategy for meeting the WFP Action Plan on Commitments to Women by 2001.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.